

THE BLIND HELP THE WAR EFFORT

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There are about 200,000 blind persons in the United States today. Of this number nearly 40,000 are employed. They are engaged in hand assembling in war factories and in warehouses; they operate telephone exchanges, do office typewriting, serve as mothers' helpers; they act as air raid wardens, and help in various other ways to further the war effort. The Government buys many articles made by blind persons for use in army camps and on ships at sea. These blind persons perform many duties that help to keep up the morale at home, such as entertaining, church organ playing, lecturing, writing, tap dancing, singing, playing for dances. They also engage in many professional pursuits, as lawyers, osteopaths, secretaries, etc.

In over 65 schools for the blind throughout the country some 6,000 pupils are learning ways and means to become useful citizens in spite of their handicap. There are three Catholic schools for the blind situated in the east. For the blind a blackout and its accompanying rules and regulations are nothing novel—they live in a continual blackout. Many blind persons have volunteered as air raid wardens in order to help and direct others to safety in time of danger.

Blind persons like to be independent. They do not look for sympathy. They have many friends, chief among which we find the faithful Seeing Eye dog. Hundreds of these dogs guide men and women all over the country, leading them back and forth from their work in the war factories; to the farm and the newsstand; to the courtroom where the blind lawyer is pleading a case for his client; to church, to the office—wherever they wish to go. After a month of study and practice, the dog and its blind master become inseparable friends. The master holds the U-shaped leather harness in his left hand, and by manipulating this harness and oral commands such as "left," "right," "forward," the dog and its master walk at a rather rapid pace. When the dog approaches the edge of the curb, it stops and waits for a signal to advance. About 15 per cent of the blind are capable of using a dog. Although it takes only three months to train a dog and one month for the blind person to get used to the dog, yet it takes about four years to train a sighted instructor to teach the dogs.

Michael Clery, an arrival in Trenton from County Tipperary, established a Catholic bookstore.⁶⁴

Seton Hall College was founded by Bishop James Roosevelt Bayley with the aid of pastors and laymen, of whom about one half were Irish, and Father Bernard McQuaid, later Bishop of Rochester, was named first rector. Staff and students were largely Irish-born or of immediate Irish background. In addition to this college, the Catholic Almanac for 1860 listed three select female schools under the Benedictine and Charity Sisters, eleven parochial schools, and two orphanages.⁶⁵

RICHARD J. PURCELL.

⁶⁴ Leahy, *History of the Diocese of Trenton* (Princeton, 1907), c. 26, 46; Francis B. Lee, *Genealogical and Personal Memoir of Mercer County, N. J.*, II (Lewis, 1907), 507.

⁶⁵ Murray, *op. cit.*, 303 f.; *Catholic Almanac*, 1860, 165.



Speaking about the Seeing Eye dogs, we should mention the grand work being done by the Seeing Eye Institute at Morristown, New Jersey, where every day you can see the instructors training the dogs at intersections and in traffic. You should also know about the Hazel Hurst Foundation at Monrovia, California. Hazel Hurst, a Catholic girl, blinded by an accident when quite young, was educated at the parochial school in Ogdensburg, New York. She put herself through Columbia University by doing stenographic work and tutoring. At the instigation of Bishop Joseph H. Conroy, the Rotary Club presented her with "Babe," a Seeing Eye dog. Accompanied by "Babe" she gave a three-year lecture tour of the United States, Canada and Europe in order to get funds to provide other blind persons with dogs. Today the Hazel Hurst Foundation, Inc., is a monument to the ingenuity, pluck and foresight of sightless Hazel Hurst.

During their leisure hours the blind read, listen to the Talking Book and the radio; play instruments and games such as chess, dominoes and card games, and perform the various duties of the household. At home the blind make rugs, dish towels, stuffed toys, hand-woven fabrics and many other articles. Knitting, crocheting, spinning, weaving and sewing for the men in the armed forces are keeping the hands of our devoted blind persons busy these days.

Much of the current literature is transcribed into Braille, and about one-fourth of the blind in the country can read Braille. Braille is a finger-reading system of embossed characters formed by using combinations of six dots. By various combinations of these six dots, all of the letters of the alphabet, plus punctuation and composition signs, can be written.

The Catholic Church has always given of her best to the world's unfortunates. She cannot lift the veil, as did Our Savior, from darkened eyes, but she gives help, comfort and consolation gladly and lavishly. It was a Catholic by the name of Valentin Haüy (1745-1822) who began the movement that brought about the establishment in all civilized countries of institutions of learning and industrial schools for the blind. Although his system of raised printing is no longer used, he will be remembered as the man who started the blind on the road to a more useful and independent life. His emphasis upon

vocational education was far in advance of general educational thought.

The name of Valentin Haüy may well be emblazoned with letters of gold on every institution for the blind in the world, for, as a result of the public exhibitions of his pupils during the year 1785 in Paris, public interest and sympathy were aroused for the blind, and he was enabled to start the National Institution for the Young Blind—the first educational institution for the blind founded in Europe. He was the first to conceive the idea of systematically teaching the blind to read by means of raised characters. His pupils were also instructed in vocal and instrumental music. The following lines, frequently found on the portrait of Haüy, are taken from one of their hymns:

“The Arts and the Virtues from him took their torch,
To give light to the Blind from the base of his tomb.”

Haüy's little orchestra, with the chorus of children who had been born blind, played during the Corpus Christi processions and in the chapel of the Tuileries. Haüy died in the arms of his brother, Abbe Haüy, on March 19, 1822, earning by his marvelous inventiveness and charitable foresight the title of “Father of the Blind.”

If you had visited the Royal Institution for Blind Youths in the year 1826, you would have found yourself in what was formerly the Seminary of St. Firmin. You would have watched the youths passing through the corridors and might have noticed a youth of seventeen, Louis Braille. It was Braille who in 1829 conceived the idea of perfecting the work of Haüy and Charles Barbier and arranging points in a number of various combinations. Since then it has become the universal type for the blind, adapted to every language. Standard English Braille consists of four grades: Grade One, uncontracted; Grade One and a Half, simply contracted; Grade Two, moderately contracted; and Grade Three, highly contracted. The usual novel copied into Braille makes from six to eight volumes. Besides the Braille writer and the hand slate, we have Braille embossed with a stereotype on thin metal sheets, from which impressions are taken on paper.

When a blind person wishes to write a letter to a blind friend, he uses slate and stylus instead of pencil and paper, and punches

out the Braille dots by hand. If he is fortunate, he might have a Braille writer which is very much like a typewriter. The blind also have Braille music scores. The notes of the Braille musicography indicate not only the tone but also its duration. In playing the piano or the organ the blind musician may read his music with his left hand while he plays with his right. All classes of music from the simplest waltz to the most elaborate symphony are made clear by means of the 63 signs resulting from combinations of the six points. The blind read their books with their fingers, running their fingers lightly over the raised dots. In fact, the blind read and write Braille very much as seeing people read and write.

Many blind people who lose their sight late in life are unable to learn Braille. Thus only about 25 per cent of the blind read Braille. For this reason the Talking Book has been developed. Books are recorded on records, just as songs and dance tunes are made. The Talking Book record plays about fifteen minutes per side. An average novel would take about fifteen or twenty two-sided records. These records are played on a special type phonograph machine called the Talking Book Machine, which is furnished on free loan to blind persons by the United States Government. Some few buy their machines. There are about 25,000 machines in the country. This is another step in making the blind independent, since they can listen to the books they wish to read instead of having some seeing person read to them from ink print. Braille books and Talking Book records are so expensive to buy that the blind as a rule do not own them. They simply borrow them from 27 free circulating libraries for the blind scattered throughout the country. They are carried through the mail postage free.

The book "Gone with the Wind" requires eighty records, and with a half hour a record it takes forty hours to read the book. Congress appropriates thousands of dollars every year to make Talking Books. A master record costs seventy dollars and from each master record 100 copies are made. Professional readers are paid five dollars to make one side of the record. Over 500 different titles are now on Talking Book records. The *Reader's Digest* is now available on records. A year's issue will require from 100 to 120 records, which are loaned from the various regional libraries for the blind.

For the Catholic blind person who reads Braille, we have the *Catholic Digest*, the *Lux Vera* and a quarterly magazine published by the Xavier Press. Catholic books also may be borrowed from the Xavier Press. The Federal Government through the Pratt-Smoot Law appropriates several thousand dollars every year for the purchase of books in embossed print, and distributes them to the 27 libraries for adult blind readers. The *Reader's Digest* is also printed in Braille; also *Our Special*—a monthly magazine for blind women; the *Home Teacher*—a professional monthly magazine for home teachers for the blind; the *Weekly News* containing current events; and the *Matilda Ziegler Magazine for the Blind*. This magazine is also published in New York Point and Moon Type. A great deal of other literature is being published, and many hand transcribers, taught by an agency such as the Red Cross or the Lions Club to write Braille, are turning out books for the blind.

Another group—the deaf-blind—present an educational problem of training and rehabilitation. A deaf-blind child places his fingers upon the throat and lips of his teacher. After much practice the child makes speech of its own, patterned on the various voice vibrations and lip movements of the teacher. Only a limited number can be taught by one teacher and much time is involved in this instruction. For the adult deaf-blind each word is spelled out by touching various parts of the hand which signify the different letters of the alphabet. Many of the adult deaf-blind wear a glove called the "Talking Glove" with the letters of the alphabet plainly marked. Thus by holding out his gloved hand—plainly showing the letters—anyone can communicate with the deaf-blind person by spelling out the words on his glove.

Many thousands of blind persons throughout the United States, Canada, Great Britain, Ireland and Australia are making novenas to Our Mother of Perpetual Help for peace with justice after victory, and for relief and patience in their hours of darkness. They know how Our Mother of Perpetual Help cured a totally blind girl at her shrine in the Redemptorist church in Boston. They have great faith in her motherly power and protection, and earnestly beseech her to wrap her mantle around their shoulders and guide their footsteps safely through life to the throne of her Son in heaven, where the veil will be

dropped from their eyes and they may gaze on the Beatific Vision and the beautiful face of their Mother of Perpetual Help for all eternity. The author has endeavored to place a copy of these novena prayers and the history of the picture of the Mother of Perpetual Help in Braille, Grade 1½, in the hands of every Catholic blind person who reads Braille. Your copy may be procured by writing to Mount Saint Alphonsus, Esopus, New York.

We hope that each diocese will eventually have one priest whose sole duties will be to care for the spiritual and temporal wants of the blind persons in his diocese. It would be his duty to arrange for retreats, provide medical care, organize motor corps to take the blind to church and concerts and outings, form theater parties, supply the needy with clothing, find employment, etc. Above all, to take care of the religious instruction of our Catholic blind in secular institutions, organize discussion clubs, provide them with catechisms and Catholic literature; prepare them for their first Holy Communion; give advice, financial assistance; arrange for Federal aid, Seeing Eye dogs, white canes—and in many other ways help our Catholic blind to achieve that independence they crave for.

Since many blind persons can attend a retreat only with great difficulty, this problem seems to be solved by the Rev. Don Hughes of Tucson, Arizona. Father Hughes has made a retreat kit for retreats in the home, and over 18 of these kits are in constant use. A retreat kit consists of ten records or more and a play-back machine, or any 16-inch machine with 33⅓ revolutions per minute will suffice. The conferences are played just like a Talking Book record, and the retreatant follows a special schedule of spiritual exercises. Originally intended for family retreats at home, this kit lends itself admirably to retreats for the blind at home.

There are many problems with regard to the blind that have yet to be solved. Principally among such problems I would place religious instruction for our Catholic blind in non-Catholic institutions. We should give them an opportunity to hear Holy Mass and to receive the Sacraments frequently; supply them with Catechisms and other religious literature. We should try to provide for the religious instruction of many Catholics in Sight Saving classes and care for the blind during released time

for religious instruction now adopted in many of the states. With a priest in charge in each diocese with a plan embracing the above, and perhaps modeled after the Catholic Guilds now established in Boston, Hartford and Buffalo, we could do a great deal for our Catholic blind. We could take up a much needed census—both local and national—since the Federal Government has none, and bring the consoling truths of our holy faith to those who are actually sitting in darkness and yearning for the light.

WILLIAM F. JENKS.

THE STATUS OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN WARTIME

The study of foreign languages, especially of enemy nations, should not be relegated to the educational scrap heap in wartime. The mistake during World War I of forbidding the teaching of German in secondary schools and of discouraging its study in colleges was learned only too late. While recent statistics show a noticeable decrease in the number of college students electing Axis languages, it is due to other contributing factors rather than to racial prejudice.

Educators are agreed that the isolationist attitude of America in the past toward the study of enemy languages during the period of hostility has had a detrimental effect. Ostrich-like we buried our collective national heads in the sand and refused to see the advantage we could have gained over our enemy by learning his language. With such knowledge we might have shaped our weapons better with a view to defeating him. After the First World War there elapsed a period of ten years at least before the study of German made its way into the high school curriculum and received a modest place in the elective languages in our liberal arts colleges.

There has never been any hostile barrier to overcome in the study of French in our American program of education. The friendly feeling of one allied nation with the other has always existed since the period of the Revolution. After 1918 this attitude was further fostered and developed, so that the study of French language, literature and civilization took on an accelerated growth. This fact is proved by the number of exchange students and professors from French universities to our own. Present-day France under Nazi dictatorship continues to enlist American sympathy and, though diminished in numbers, students learn of the glory of France in the past and believe in its certain resurrection in the future.

The American educational program of the nineteen-thirties was of a decidedly scientific nature. Specialized fields of science in colleges opened up new avenues of research, so that the foreign languages soon were regarded as keys to unlock the scientific secrets of other countries. The new status of language as a handmaid of science laid aside the great works of national literature and focussed attention primarily on grammar to meet the needs of academic requirements. The increased number of texts

with scientific readings in biology, chemistry, physics, mathematics and mechanics made possible the rapid acquiring of a scientific vocabulary.

Modern German scientists have contributed greatly to invention and discovery in almost every department of human thought. It is part of the mentality of the German mind to think deeply, classify accurately, and teach thoroughly. Interesting atavistic theories have been advanced to explain this national characteristic. Climatic conditions have been adduced by some as a reason for this phenomenon. The north temperate zone inclines more to longer winters, which compel those who land within that compass to remain indoors for greater periods of time than dwellers in warmer climates. The time of enforced leisure was employed usefully in household arts and study. As the generations succeeded one another there arose a very positive scientific type of mentality, which offered a marked contrast to other nations. This atavistic trait in modern times is what we term the German scientific mind.

In proportion as progress was made in scientific fields by investigators of German nationality, it became necessary for other nations to learn that language to keep pace with the rapid strides of science. American universities admitted this tacitly by requiring at least a reading knowledge of it from candidates for higher degrees. In the liberal arts college German was usually the required language for those students who made science their major field.

The ordinary peaceful pursuit of science as an asset to the promotion of the health and happiness of mankind is now replaced by research into scientific means of mass destruction of the human race. In the present global warfare the study of the language of the enemy becomes even more imperative, to know the mentality of those fighting against us. The function of language in itself is social intercourse, which embraces in scope both friend and foe.

The Oriental mind is a real enigma to western civilization. The agglutinative languages to which Japanese belongs offer considerable difficulty to those accustomed to the Indo-European group of inflectional languages. At present linguistic barriers are rapidly being broken down by an intensive program to make America language conscious. The essential languages, French,

German, Spanish and Italian, are being supplemented in the larger universities by the study of Chinese, Japanese, Russian, Siamese and Indian dialects.

The wartime expediency that is now regulating the study of foreign languages is setting aside the accumulative treasure of world literature. Every nation by means of its language has contributed in some constructive way to the history of human civilization. The study of other languages has as one ulterior motive the opening of the student's mind to other cultures than his own. This tends to broaden his view, break down national and racial prejudices, and finally to make for a spirit of understanding between countries.

One of the severest indictments against the Nazi anti-Semitic policy is the scrapping of the Old Testament on the ground that it serves only as a history of the Jewish people, keeping alive their memory and traditions. The supernatural, inspired character of the book has no appeal to the materialistic Nazi mind.

Academic interest in Spanish is at its highest peak in present-day education. The Pan-American feeling of good-will is made the basis of efforts to popularize the Spanish language. Its commercial utility is accentuated to such a degree that students are considering Spanish as the only modern language worth studying. The traditional literature of Castilian Spain is being superseded by that produced by South American authors.

The study of foreign languages is a real war effort. This need is so imperative that editors and publishers of French, German and Spanish works are actively engaged in preparing for immediate use military readings. They look upon this as a unit of national defense. It is interesting to see the amount of Nazi propaganda there is in articles dealing with modern warfare that emanate from Germany. The American student is warned that this is an expression of Nazi psychology that aims to defeat by intimidation. Knowing that German propaganda literature is released only after strict censorship, our college students are not impressed by accounts of Nazi greatness.

Teachers of foreign languages have much to offer to the American people in this national emergency. The status of foreign languages in wartime is low, even in a fallen condition. Yet teachers of those languages can imitate Nehemias, whose story is told in the Old Testament. There in the Second Book of Esdras

it is related that Nehemias, the cupbearer, came into the presence of King Artaxerxes, the conqueror of the Jewish people.

"I was as one languishing away before his face," says the writer. "And the king said to me: 'Why is thy countenance sad, seeing that thou dost not appear to be sick?' And I said to the king: 'O king, live forever: why should not my countenance be sorrowful, seeing the city of the place of the sepulchres of my fathers is desolate and the gates thereof burnt with fire? . . . If it seem good to the king . . . send me into Judea . . . and I will build it.' "

Nehemias was commissioned by the monarch to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem and successfully accomplished his task. So the foreign language teacher in more favorable times will repair the ruin of the past by constructive work in the future.

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